

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A device comprising:  
a body defining a tapered hole configured for guiding a member into a tube coupled to the body, and defining a slot communicating with the hole for separating the body and the member while the member remains in the tube.
2. (original) The device of claim 1 wherein the body defines a bore communicating with the tapered hole.
3. (original) The device of claim 2 wherein the bore has a constant diameter.
4. (original) The device of claim 2 wherein the bore is tapered.
5. (original) The device of claim 2 wherein a width of the bore is greater than a width of a narrowest portion of the tapered hole.
6. (original) The device of claim 2 wherein the slot extends from the tapered hole and the bore to an external surface of the body.
7. (original) The device of claim 1 wherein the member comprises a suture thread.
8. (original) The device of claim 1 further comprising a handle extending from the body.

9. (currently amended) A device comprising:  
a tube; and  
a body defining a tapered hole configured for guiding a member into ~~[[a]]~~ the tube coupled to the body, and defining a slot communicating with the hole for separating the body and the member while the member remains in the tube.

10. (original) The device of claim 9 wherein the body is configured for connection to an end of the tube.

11. (original) The device of claim 9 wherein the body defines a bore for receiving the tube, the bore communicating with the tapered hole.

12. (original) The device of claim 11 wherein the bore has a constant diameter.

13. (original) The device of claim 11 wherein the bore is tapered.

14. (original) The device of claim 11 wherein a width of the bore is greater than a width of a narrowest portion of the tapered hole.

15. (original) The device of claim 11 wherein the slot extends from the tapered hole and the bore to an external surface of the body.

16. (original) The device of claim 9 wherein the tube defines an opening for receiving the member.

17. (original) The device of claim 16 wherein a width of the opening is substantially the same as a width of the narrowest portion of the tapered hole.

18. (original) The device of claim 9 wherein the member comprises a suture thread.

19. (original) The device of claim 9 further comprising a handle extending from the body.

20. (original) A method comprising:

coupling a body to an end of a tube, the body defining a tapered hole and a slot;  
guiding a member into the tube through the tapered hole; and  
separating the body and the member by passing the member through the slot.

21. (original) The method of claim 20 wherein coupling comprises receiving the end of the tube in a bore in the body, the bore communicating with the tapered hole.

22. (currently amended) A device comprising:

guide means defining a tapered hole configured for guiding a member into a tube  
coupled to the guide means, the guide means including means for separating the guide  
means and the member while the member remains in the tube.

23. (new) The device of claim 1, wherein the body includes a first terminal end and includes a second terminal end portion, the first terminal end defining an opening and the second terminal end portion defining the tapered hole, and wherein the slot extends from the first terminal end to the second terminal end portion.

24. (new) The device of claim 1, wherein the body is configured such that the tapered hole guides the member when advanced into the tube from a larger opening of the tapered hole to a smaller opening of the tapered hole.

25. (new) The device of claim 9, wherein the body includes a first terminal end and includes a second terminal end portion, the first terminal end defining an opening and the second terminal end portion defining the tapered hole, and wherein the slot extends from the first terminal end to the second terminal end portion.

26. (new) The device of claim 9, wherein the body is configured such that the tapered hole guides the member when advanced into the tube from a larger opening of the tapered hole to a smaller opening of the tapered hole.

27. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein separating the body and the member by passing the member through the slot comprises separating the body and the member by passing the member through the slot while the member remains in the tube.

28. (new) The method of claim 20, further comprising decoupling the body from the end of the tube.

29. (new) A device comprising:  
a body having a first terminal end and having a second terminal end portion, the first terminal end defining an opening and the second terminal end portion defining a tapered hole for guiding a member into a tube, and defining a slot extending from the first terminal end to the second terminal end portion that communicates with the hole for separating the body and the member.